

SEO & Web Writing

Week 8 – Feb. 27

UW Social Media Certificate

Winter 2013

Agenda

- Guest speaker: Jamie Steven, SEOmoz
- Housekeeping
- CMP update
- Minute papers
- Simply Measured review
- Writing for the web workshop

Housekeeping

- **Next week:** Samantha Moscheck, building custom tools
- **Looking ahead:** Mala Chandra, spring preview
- **Group projects, week 10:**
 - Please let me know if your group needs to go early or late. Otherwise, we'll proceed in alphabetical order:
 - 1. Facebook
 - 2. Google+
 - 3. Instagram
 - 4. LinkedIn
 - 5. Pinterest
 - 6. Twitter

CMP update



- **Pinterest team update**
- **Next quarter's projects:**
 - Gay City Health Project
 - Teenwrite
 - Women in Innovation
 - Live at Benaroya Hall Concert Series
 - Motley Zoo Animal Rescue
 - Happy Paws Petcare
- **Others?** Pitch night is Wed., April 3, the first night of class!

Minute papers

- I like it when a company blogs as it shows me their personality and thoughts they have regarding a product or service. This helps me to decide about that company from a purchasing standpoint and a match to my likes and dislikes.
- It all boils down to what the objective of the blog is meant to be (industry outlook, customer loyalty, general industry knowledge, etc.), how it correlates to the business end objectives, and who the audience is. I've seen my current and past employers ineffectively use their blogs, by constantly selling at people 100% of the time.
- My personal belief is that blogs will soon take over traditional press releases. They are to the point and can be packed full of photos, videos and secondary materials essential for pitching media. It's a one-stop-shop.

Simply Measured review

- Key findings:
 - SMC Seattle has more fans but less engagement.
 - All three clubs see increased engagement around events, but SMC only sees engagement during events.
 - SMC does not publish a drumbeat of content during off-peak times, whereas AAF and AMA engage with fans and followers somewhat regularly.
 - Essentially, SMC uses social media as a bulletin board. The other clubs are more conversational—and it's paying off for AAF and AMA in the form of increased engagement.

Writing for the web



How people read online

- **They don't—at least not the way we typically think about how people read.**
- People's online attention spans are short (roughly 4 seconds!) and they rarely read web pages word by word.
- Instead, readers scan the page, picking out individual words and sentences.
- Recent studies show 79% of readers scan a new page, while 16% read the copy word by word.

Eye-tracking studies



Heat maps like this show areas where users looked the most as colored red; the yellow areas indicate fewer views, followed by the blue areas. Grey areas don't attract any fixations.

What the F pattern means

- Users won't read your text thoroughly, so the first two paragraphs must state the most important information.
- Start headlines, sub-heads, paragraphs and bullets with information-carrying words that users will notice when scanning down the page.
- **People will read the third word on a line much less often than the first two.**



Get to the point

- Journalists use leads to summarize, which is known as the “inverted pyramid.” Readers can stop at any time and still get the key details.
- On the web, inverted pyramid is even more important.
- Excessive word count makes it harder for readers to extract useful info. **The more you say, the more people tune out the message.**
- Best practice in web writing is to write what you think users need, then cut it by 50%.

keep it **simple.**



**Remember, there is
no school next Thursday.**

Create user-friendly pages

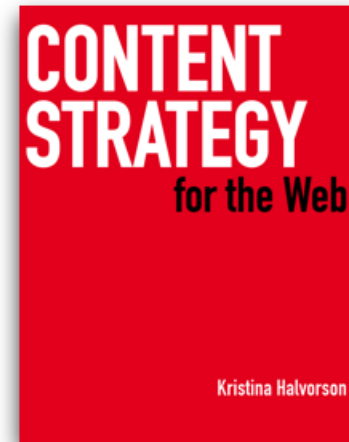
- **Web writers should employ “scannable” tactics.**
- Use headings and sub-heads to break up the copy.
- Write short sentences; limit paragraphs to 2-3 sentences.
- Use bulleted or numbered lists.
- **Embrace white space to visually separate information.**
- Add pictures, images, graphics or illustrations.

Writing strong headlines

- Clearly explain what the page is about.
- In print, curiosity can get people to turn the page or start reading an article. Online, it's just not how people read.
- Make the first word an important, information-carrying one. For example, start with the name of the person or concept being featured in the article.
- **Use plain language, writing in the style your audience will understand the first time they read it.**

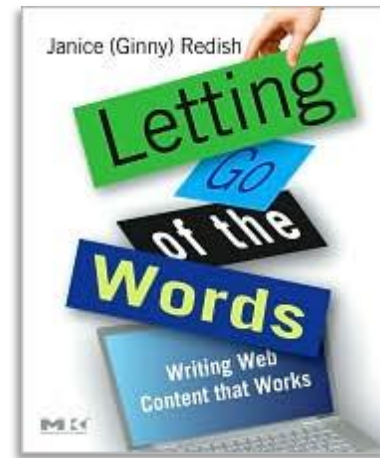
Content Strategy for the Web

- Written by **Kristina Halvorson** in 2009 and updated in 2012, “Content Strategy for the Web” is a must-read.
- Without meaningful content, your site isn’t worth much to your audience. But creating meaningful content is hard.
- Halvorson explains how to craft useful, usable content, and teaches how to audit and analyze existing content so you can make informed decisions.
- Amazon link to the [2012 edition](#).



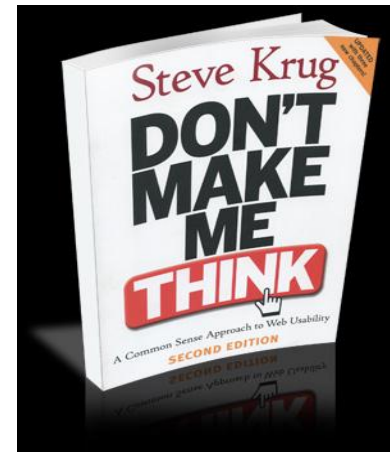
Letting Go of the Words

- Written by **Ginny Redish** in 2007 and updated in 2012, “Letting Go of the Words” is used in workshops.
- Redish is one of the world’s most recognized names in information design.
- Learn best practices for content strategy, headline and subject line writing, SEO and social media that you can employ right out of the box.
- Amazon link to the [2012 edition](#).



Don't Make Me Think

- Written by **Steve Krug** in 2000 and updated in 2005, “Don't Make Me Think” is like the Bible of usability.
- People won't use your web site if they can't find their way around it.
- Krug's easy-to-follow principles teach you to think like a usability expert. That might sound like a designer's job, but today's new media pros must understand web design and usability.
- Amazon link to the [2005 edition](#).



Workshop



Use everyday words

What are the common, everyday words:

- change
- competency
- main
- procure
- start
- subsequent

Remove uncommon words

Suggest replacements for these muddy words:

- acquire
- approximately
- constrain
- methodology
- mitigate
- administer

Write short sentences

Rewrite these sentences without the unnecessary words:

- The creditor must first establish that the debtor is undoubtedly bankrupt.
- Professor Smith was picked by each and every person on the committee.
- The student needs to obtain high marks in science in order to study medicine.
- We will send out brochures to the general public.
- You must be willing to challenge yourself in order to get the most out of your education at university.

Resources

- SEOmoz – [Beginner's guide to SEO](#)
- Search Engine Watch – [8 SEO tips that take 15 minutes](#)
- Yahoo – [Web writing style guide](#)
- Jakob Nielsen – [Writing for the web tutorial](#)
- Web Designer Depot – [20 tips for web writing](#)